Information for Social Change

Information for Social Change Number 36

Summer 2016

Issue Editors:
John Pateman & Ken Williment

Information for Social Change is an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers. It is committed to promoting alternatives to the dominant paradigms of library and information work and publishes its own journal, *Information for Social Change* freely available at http://www.libr.org/isc

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The ways by which information is controlled and mediated has a serious influence on the ways people think, how they communicate, what they believe is the "real world", what the limits of the permissible are. This applies equally to information that comes through the channels of the mass media, through our bookshops or through our libraries.

But we want to go further than that, documenting also the alternatives to this control, the radical and progressive channels by which truly unfettered, unmediated ideas may circulate. And further still: to encourage information workers to come together, to share ideas, to foster these alternatives – whether we are publishers, librarians, booksellers, communication workers or distributors. Whoever you are, if you are in sympathy with us, join us.

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Editorial

John Pateman / Ken Williment

Can libraries help to change the world and make it a better place and, if so, do they have the right skills and tools to achieve this task? This question is at the heart of this issue of Information for Social Change, and keeps with the theme of Libraries and Social Change.

A common strand which seems to run through all the studies into the skills required to carry out community-led and needs-based library work is that library workers need the appropriate skills, experience and knowledge to enable them to identify, prioritise and meet community needs. Experience and knowledge can be gained on the job, but the skills must be in place before the library worker attempts to engage with the community and build sustained, meaningful, relationships over time.

This need was identified in 2000 and became a recommendation of the *Open To All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion* research project: *Public libraries should urgently analyse the training needs of their staff, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the best services for socially excluded people. Training programmes to be developed for all services linking equal opportunities, anti-racism, anti-sexism, cultural and social exclusion awareness.*

Contributors

John Pateman

John Pateman was part of the Open To All? research team and he explores 'Why Do Library Workers Not Have The Skills To Meet Community Needs?' Pateman looks at some recent work in Ontario - an Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector (2016) prepared as a background document for the emerging Ontario Culture Strategy – to show that community needs and how to meet them are not embedded in LIS education and training, digital skills and leadership. As a way forward Pateman takes us back to the future with The Right 'Man' For The Job? the role of empathy in community librarianship (2008) which suggests that the traditional library worker skill set should be complimented with ccommunication skills, listening skills, influencing relationships, reflective practice, improved confidence and assertiveness, negotiation skills, dealing with conflict.

Vivian Howard, Jenna Knorr and Elizabeth O'Brien

Pateman references some good practice at the School of Information Management at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, which offers a program on Community-Led Services. This new approach is explained in more detail by Vivian Howard, Jenna Knorr, and Elizabeth O'Brien in 'Bringing the Community-Led Service Approach to the University Classroom: A Case Study in Community-Engaged Learning'. They make some very important linkages between libraries and real world issues and challenges such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report

and the 2014 One Nova Scotia Commission report *Now or Never.* This makes the point that libraries are not aloof, neutral and apolitical institutions, but an integral part of the communities they serve.

The LIS module at Dalhousie has used the pioneering work of the The Working Together Project as its framework and is organized to follow the stages in community-led planning, including: developing a community-led strategy and service structure, understanding systemic barriers, developing community entry techniques, mapping community assets, building relationship and partnerships, conducting a social inclusion audit, and evaluating the success of community-led initiatives. This new way of learning has led to new thinking around communication and promotion, programming, staff training, and social workers in the library.

Ken Williment

Ken Williment was part of The Working Together Project and he considers in 'Library Schools as the Creators of Library Culture: An Opportunity for Cultural Shift?' the need for a change in organizational culture. This is critical to the success of any library which seeks to become community-led and needs-based. Williment uses a discussion with LIS students as the framework for his argument which concludes that

Presently, most library schools do not have coursework which integrate micro-level skills which allow students the ability of practically explore tools or approaches to work collaboratively with community to identify needs and generate responses to needs (in a library context).   In order for community engagement to succeed it needs to remain inductive and non-prescriptive.   Library schools are the first step in the acculturation process for professional librarians and without exposure to community based practices, a number of barriers will continue to exist to working with community –ranging from the use of jargon, the control of who

identifies and creates programs and services, and the changing realities of where people seek out effective answers for local information – libraries run the danger of presenting an appearance of change, without addressing the systematic and systemic cultural change which truly needs to occur.

Martin Wolske

So change needs to happen in all parts of the library organisation – from strategy and structures through to systems and culture – if the community led approach is to become embedded as the new 'way we do things around here.' The need for radical rather than superficial change is clear, and Martin Wolske drills down deeper into this with 'A Radical Reconsideration of Digital Literacy'. In doing so he asks a question that is at the very heart of why Information for Social Change was created and exists:

But is it possible that we approach digital technology and literacy training and programming through dominant paradigms that keep invisible the various ways our digital technology and media are controlled and mediated so as to privilege a few over the many?

This question is also at the centre of community led and needs based work which assumes that the community is the expert in its own needs and that the role of the library worker is an enabler or facilitator to match the resources of the library (and critically its human resources) with the needs of the community. Library workers can share their skills and knowledge with the community who will in turn share their real world knowledge of the community. The outcome will be that the library and the community work together to co-produce the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of services. As Wolske points out:

In taking such a transformative approach, we library and information workers take a step away from the dominant neoliberal paradigm of digital technologies and digital literacies and instead take a step towards amplifying human forces working towards a more just society.

Joe Pateman

Information for Social Change always seeks to balance the theoretical with the practical and we have two excellent examples of these approaches in this issue of ISC. For an understanding of some of the concepts which underpin needs-based libraries we have Joe Pateman's 'Theoretical approaches to public libraries'. Pateman takes as his starting point the seminal 1981 article by Robert Cox who highlighted the strengths of critical theory and the shortcomings of problem solving theory in international relations. Pateman applies these two types of theories to a comparison of public libraries:

The problem solving approach underlying traditional libraries has limited the revolutionary role that libraries have historically performed in educating and empowering the working class. In the modern era of neoliberal capitalism, traditional libraries have failed in advancing human needs, democracy and the self-actualisation of the individual. The radical democratic and transformative function at the heart of public libraries can be restored by needs based libraries, which draw upon the insights of Marxist critical theory.

Traditional libraries - with their focus on active users, their hierarchical structures, their disabling systems and their social control cultures - have used the problem solving approach as their dominant paradigm. Needs-based libraries – with their focus on those with the greatest needs, their holocratic structures, their empowering systems and their social change

cultures – will use critical theory to not only interpret the communities they serve, but to change them as well.

Edgardo Civallero

And real world positive change is also the driver of Edgardo Civallero's discussion on a project entitled 'Among shelves: Librarianship for librarians. A starting project on LIS training'. This is an initiative aimed at providing LIS training to those colleagues who, for whatever reason, have not had access to it:

The project aims to create digital books and manuals, for free distribution and download and easily printable, which compile and synthesize the latest information on the most basic LIS topics: from the design and creation of a library from scratch to bookbinding and repair of documents, and from cataloging and classification and project drafting to the organization of reading programs or library management in indigenous communities. It seeks to respond to the needs of a large number of library workers (school, rural, popular, community, mobile librarians) that do not have the opportunity of professional training but would like to expand their knowledge and to build a solid foundation for their skills.

We endorse and applaud this initiative for a number of reasons. It is needs-based and will be driven by the needs of library workers and the communities they serve. It is focused on those with greatest needs, and will be piloted in Latin America, but will be transferable and applicable to library workers and communities in Africa, India and Southeastern Asia. It is international in scope (another commonality with ISC which has always looked beyond narrow and meaningless national borders to find and emulate good practice, wherever it exists in the world): contacts are being established with international institutions and programs that would like to support the initiative. And, finally, it is 'a starting project on LIS

training' which does not pretend to have all the answers but which will be something that we can all learn from. So good luck and well done Edgardo!

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Why Do Library Workers Not Have The Skills To Meet Community Needs?

John Pateman

The simple answer to this very Big Question is 'because they are Library Workers'. In other words, they are trained in all of the aspects of providing library services, but they do not have the key skills that are required to identify, prioritize and meet community needs. We need a different kind of Library Worker who has a skill set which combines traditional library skills with the ability to build sustained relationships with the community. I call this new hybrid model the Community Development Worker. In this position description there would be a 20% focus on library skills and an 80% focus on community development.

Having a good rear view mirror is always useful but we also need to look forward through the windscreen. And we need to learn from the mistakes we have made in the past. So any future Workforce Development strategy for Public Libraries must recognize the need for Community Development skills. I am talking about a fundamental transformation here and not just a modernization or greater use of technology. I am saying that we need to change the attitudes and behavior of our staff as part of a broader culture shift from a Traditional to a Community-Led and ultimately a Needs-Base paradigm.

The basis of all cultures is language and so we need to change the language if we are going to shift the culture. This means new Job Titles

and Position Descriptions. It means that we should abandon old labels like Adult, Children's and Reference and replace them with new brands such as Lifelong Learning, Inclusion and Diversity. It means repositioning the Library and the Library Worker within the wider environment of Community Development and Social Change. So let's take a look at some attempts to shift the Public Library culture through Workforce Development - two from the UK (transformation) and another from Canada (modernisation).

Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector

My Canadian example of modernisation comes from a report published in Ontario. An *Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector* (2016) was prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport by Communications MDR. This Ontario Culture Strategy Background Document identified the need to invest in the Cultural Sector Workforce and looked at some good practice in education and training, digital skills and leadership.

Investing in the culture sector workforce

Investing in the culture sector workforce, whether business, technical, or creative professionals, ensures that they have access to skills they need to innovate, seize business opportunities, and design and deliver digital products and services to the public.

The Ontario Arts Council's strategic plan prioritizes strengthening skills, capacity building, and sharing knowledge among Ontario's artists and arts organizations. Objectives include ensuring that artists and other arts professionals have access to learning opportunities and convening, connecting, and promoting collaboration within the arts community.

Education and training

Several Canadian jurisdictions have culture policies to encourage careers in the culture sector, strengthen the sector's competitiveness, and build future demand for cultural goods.

New Brunswick cites increased recognition and support for artists as one of the key goals of its policy, to be achieved by identifying, supporting, and promoting professional development through education and training opportunities for professional artists.

BC Creative Futures is an education, arts engagement, and professional skills training strategy aimed at strengthening the province's creative economy. The strategy supports the province-wide BC Jobs Plan and aims to develop the next generation of creative leaders. It focuses on programing for young people, post-secondary programs, scholarship programs, and co-op placements to promote young professionals working in BC's creative businesses.

Digital skills

Developing digital skills allows creative individuals and companies to seize new business and creative opportunities. Australia's creative industry strategy recognizes the importance of creative and digital skills in creating a more innovative workforce and provides three national initiatives designed to improve digital skills in the sector. The Workforce Innovation Program supports digital skills development through creative industry associations.

Scotland has recently released its skills investment plan for the creative industries. The plan recognizes the importance of developing skills in entrepreneurship, communication, and leadership. The plan also

acknowledges the growing demand for "digital skills in relation to design capability, use of technology to support creative storytelling, and in business practice." In describing the role of digital and computing skills in driving the creative sector, the plan notes that digital skills are relevant for new entrants to the creative workforce. Senior managers also need a solid understanding of the commercial opportunities afforded by digital exploitation, including how to plan for and execute digital strategies.

Leadership

Leadership and succession planning continue to be an important issue in the culture sector. For example, in Arts Council England's strategic framework for the arts, a key priority is to increase arts leadership skills to enhance leaders' understanding of their communities, ability to work creatively with a wide range of people, and understanding of the potential of digital technologies. The framework specifies skills development, collaborative working, and knowledge-sharing as priority areas for action. [479]

Saskatchewan's strategic plan focuses on ensuring that the culture sector has the business skills to succeed commercially. The plan emphasizes building organizational capacity in leadership, human and financial resources, infrastructure, and strategic plans.

In 2013, the Ontario Museum Association (OMA) launched the museum **success**ion project to enable organizational capacity-building, enhance governance models, encourage career and professional development, and support planning for sustainability and leadership. A key component of the program provides training and resources to help museum professionals develop skills to meet the challenges facing the sector and ensure smooth leadership transition.

Within the arts community, some arts funding organizations and private foundations are creating tools and online resources to help arts groups plan for new leadership. For example, in the US, the National Arts Strategies Foundation provides training and online resources to support leadership development in the arts, and the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, which developed the long-standing Leadership Institute, relaunched it in 2015 as the Creative Leadership Lab in a partnership with the Sundance Film Institute.'

Analysis

This is an environmental scan of the cultural sector and so it is not specific to public libraries. It is also necessarily high level and broad brush. It seeks to identify good practice rather than make suggestions or recommendations. It is 'Show and Tell' rather than 'This is what you need to do.' But my major criticism is that it very light on content and doesn't really suggest anything new or different. There is nothing here that is going to shift the Public Library culture of comfort and complacency.

I also have a problem with the big focus on Digital Skills, as if this is going to be the silver bullet or panacea that will solve all of our problems and make us fully socially inclusive over night. Don't get me wrong, I understand the important role that technology can play in supporting and delivering library services – but it can only ever be a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is easier, and far more comfortable, to install a new piece of technology than to challenge and shift staff attitudes and behaviors.

I was also disappointed to find that community needs are mostly absent from this environmental scan. They do get picked up under Leadership - 'to increase arts leadership skills to enhance leaders' understanding of

their communities' – but as Karl Marx once famously pointed out, understanding society is not enough – we must also seek to change it.

Open To All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion

While I was less than inspired by the *Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector*, I also found it very typical of many other reports which have been produced since *Open To All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion* was published in 2000. The UK, in particular, has churned out a plethora of reports looking at what public libraries do and how they need to change – but few of their recommendations, no matter how limited in scope, have been taken forward. The biggest change to Public Libraries in the UK has been driven by the Economic Base rather than the Superstructure (Strategy, Structures, Systems). The unwillingness and inability to change has led to mass library closures and hundreds of Library Worker layoffs in the UK. The Traditional transactional model has been swept away by the winds of Neo Liberal ideology, masked behind an austerity agenda. Public Libraries which embraced the *Open to All?* recommendations and began the journey of developing a Needs Based Library are those which have best weathered the storm.

So what did *Open to All?* have to say about staffing, recruitment and training? Suggestions for transformational change in Workforce Development were embedded across the *Open to All?* recommendations (from Needs Assessment and Research to Outreach, Community Development and Partnerships), but there were also some specific ways forward identified:

Public libraries need to reassess their recruitment and selection policies (including reassessing the requirement for qualifications in librarianship) in order to attract more staff into the workforce from socially excluded backgrounds.

Public libraries should urgently analyse the training needs of their staff, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the best services for socially excluded people. Training programmes to be developed for all services linking equal opportunities, anti-racism, anti-sexism, cultural and social exclusion awareness.

Public libraries should adopt positive action programmes so that the library workforce incorporates socially excluded people more equitably than at present. All library authorities should aim to develop recruitment and selection statements outlining how this will be achieved.

Public libraries should challenge staff and organisational attitudes, behaviour, values and culture through staff development and training and a competency-based approach to staff recruitment and appraisal.

Library authorities should change their staffing structures to bring them in line with their social exclusion strategies. This will require new job titles, job descriptions, person profiles and competencies which recognise the importance of outreach and should lead on service delivery to the socially excluded.

Schools of Information and Library Studies (SILS) should review their recruitment base to ensure that people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds are brought into library work.

SILS need to urgently reassess their course content in conjunction with public libraries. Courses should incorporate core modules which cover social exclusion issues, such as the causes of social exclusion, information poverty and equal opportunities.

Analysis

I think that these recommendations have stood the test of time and are as relevant today as when they were written 16 years ago.   I like the way that #2 broadens out the training base to encompass issues such as anti-racism and anti-sexism. This is important in communities like mine where racism is a big issue. I also like #3 because I have seen how positive recruitment can have a big impact on staff attitudes and behaviour. #5 is also important because structures should always be aligned with strategies and systems.

It is also important to point out that the *Open to All?* recommendations were stepping stones on the never ending journey towards the development of a Needs Based library, which is the ultimate extension of what we in Canada call a Community Led library. This term is used in a very different context in the UK where 'community led' means replacing paid library workers with unpaid community volunteers.

I would also commend another UK report which looked specifically at the role of empathy in community librarianship.

The Right 'Man' For The Job?

I have often said that the question mark in *Open to All?* is the most significant part of the title of this ground breaking research project. Up until this point most Library Workers assumed (dangerous word) that Public Libraries were truly Open to All. That there were no barriers to access and that we just had to open the Library doors and people would chose to come through them or not. *Open to All?* completely destroyed this myth and made Open to All a question rather than a statement. *Open to All?* also had a deep and significant impact on all subsequent Public Library research in the UK. A case in point is *The Right 'Man' For The Job?*

the role of empathy in community librarianship (2008) which also has a question mark in the title.

It was generally agreed that Library Workers had all the skills they needed to do their jobs. They could catalogue and classify books, provide services, manage collections and develop programs. Their job was to run the library as effectively and efficiently as possible. What the community needed and wanted was not their concern. They knew best. They were the experts. They were certainly not Social Workers or Community Development Workers. That was somebody else's job. *The Right 'Man' For The Job?* challenged these assumptions and asked the critical question - what skills do Library Workers require to meet community needs? And what is the role and importance of empathy, in particular, within this dynamic?

The researchers found that, not only did many Library Workers not have the right skill set to meet community needs, but they had no interest or understanding in issues such as social exclusion, diversity and other key demographic drivers within the communities that their libraries were based in. The report found that radical changes were required in staff training and development and made recommendations relating to Knowledge, Skills and Empathy:

Knowledge

The priority for public library managers within a staff training capacity is to address the apparent gap amongst staff in knowledge and understanding of social inclusion policy and political drivers. Staff at all levels working within services and projects that are responsive to such drivers should be fully informed of relevant external and political influences, and given the opportunity to question and discuss them

further, and thus fully engage with the reasons for particular service developments and initiatives.

Similarly, greater effort should be made to provide *relevant* training and information on groups affected by social exclusion, in an attempt to significantly raise levels of awareness and cultural sensitivity amongst all staff.

Staff need the intellectual time and space to fully engage with and consider these issues, so the 'away day' method may be appropriate, particularly in reducing the risk of staff feeling additional pressure in having to absorb new information in their day-to-day work environment, and subsequently form a negative perception of inclusive approaches as 'add-on' responsibilities.

This needs to be carefully planned and scheduled into all new projects and service developments as an important part of the process, particularly in overcoming the ever-present 'lack of time and money' barrier.

Skills

Research participants have defined the skills required to work in socially inclusive services as 'advanced customer care' skills, and many public library authorities are already providing valuable training in this area. Again this should be prioritised within project and service development plans.

The concept of advanced customer care could be broken down as such:

Communication skills
Listening skills
Influencing relationships

Reflective practice

Improved confidence and assertiveness

Negotiation skills

Dealing with conflict.

Can empathy be taught?

It would be fair to conclude that it would be difficult to 'teach empathy', to train staff to develop an emotional response that is informed and influenced by personality, belief systems and other individual characteristics. However, the development of certain empathic skills can be encouraged by providing public library staff with the right knowledge and circumstantial information, involving them in decision-making processes, and facilitating the development of appropriate skills.

As a result of such interventions, staff can be enabled to show higher levels of empathy towards members of all communities, provided that they are willing – and have some natural capacity – to do so. This is a significant finding in supporting library staff at all levels to communicate with library users from all cultural backgrounds and, in the longer term, to deliver a more effective service.

As such, the future recruitment of the right 'man' for the job will be intrinsic to the effectiveness of public libraries' contribution to the social inclusion agenda, and should be an absolute priority for the future of community librarianship.

Analysis

I applaud these recommendations because they are placed within a context of holistic cultural change. Staff cannot and should not be expected to change radically overnight. It is not realistic to expect that

someone goes to bed as a Library Worker and wakes up, fully formed and equipped, as a Community Development Worker. Staff need to be given time to learn and adjust, to de-program and re-program. But it also needs to be made clear that they should be willing and able to do so.

The starting point is to build their Knowledge and awareness of concepts such as social exclusion, diversity and community needs. They then need to be given the time and space to embed this Knowledge and awareness into their everyday work so that they own it and see it as integral to what they do and not some kind of add-on or luxury which they will get round to after completing all their essential duties.

This Knowledge and awareness can then be used to inform the Skills which they require to meet community needs. While I do not agree with the transactional language of 'advanced customer care' and would prefer 'relationship building', I fully endorse the suggested tool kit, particularly Listening Skills, Influencing Relationships and Reflective Practice. The full skill set should be taught at Library School and then reinforced and given a local flavour on the job.

Can empathy be taught? is another interesting question. Workforce Training and Development can only go some way towards building empathy – maybe 20% with the remaining 80% being determined by the character and personality of the individual member of staff. Nature and Nuture plays into this debate. Some people seem to be naturally more empathetic than others. Background and upbringing are also important. Someone who was fortunate enough to be born into a nice, stable, middle class family, with all the advantages and entitlements which that confers, may not readily or automatically be able to understand why someone cannot bring their books back to the library on time or why they make such a big deal about a 25 cent fine. The ability to stand in other people's shoes and see the world through other people's eyes is the most critical

requirement of developing a Community Led and ultimately a Needs Based Public Library. But there is some good work going on in this area.

Federation of Ontario Public Libraries ran a webinar on 'Learning to Read Each Other: the Empathy Toy in Ontario's Libraries' The premise is that reading fiction increases empathy and this provides another tool to build community and understanding. 'Already in schools, offices, maker spaces and libraries across 43 countries, this award winning communication tool helps players aged 6-99 practice a variety of challenging skills related to collaboration, creative dialogue and problem-solving. You will meet Twenty One Toys, the Toronto-based social enterprise behind the Empathy Toy, and will discover specific applications for the Toy in both student programming and staff professional development.'

Our Library Schools are also starting to step up to the plate when it comes to giving their students the tools they need to work in Community Led libraries. The School of Information Management at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia offers a program on Community-Led Services. The learning objectives include:

To consider various ethical, professional, and pragmatic issues related to serving particular community groups
To examine the role of the library in furthering societal goals and empowering individuals and groups within the community
To identify and assess the diverse needs of identifiable community groups in order to determine appropriate library service

And the University of British Columbia School of Library, Archival and Information Studies offers a program on Community-Led Libraries which aims:

To expose students to an intellectual and practical understanding of Community-Led principles and approaches, including the theoretical work that supports these principles

To investigate and evaluate how Community-Led principles and approaches are infused through new and developing library thinking and practice

To interpret and demonstrate the value of Community-Led principles and approaches for building inclusiveness, citizenship and democracy by libraries fort the communities they serve

However, as this brief review has demonstrated, we still have a long way to go before we can say that Library Workers have all the skills required to meet community needs. Significant changes must be made to the curricula at Library Schools and to the Workforce Development programs at Public Libraries to keep in stride with the spreading Community Led movement. We need ongoing waves of new model Library Workers who can continue the never ending journey towards a Needs Based Library.

References

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Bringing the Community-Led Service Approach to the University Classroom:
A Case Study in Community-Engaged Learning
Vivian Howard, Jenna Knorr and Elizabeth O'Brien

Why is such a course particularly relevant and timely?

The community-led approach to outreach is an emerging model being adopted by Canadian library systems. For public libraries especially, this service model can help libraries to become even more inclusive and welcoming for patrons of all kinds. By accommodating for the needs of all library users and adapting programming, collections, and more to the communities in which public libraries operate, the public library can continue to re-assert itself as a relevant and essential resource.

The Working Together Project explicitly encouraged schools of library and information studies to develop classes focusing on community-led approaches[1]. However, several key factors in the external environment

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[1] Halifax Public Libraries (along with Vancouver Public Library, Regina Public Library, and Toronto Public Library) was one of the original sites of the Working Together Project which ran from 2004-2008. The goals of this project were to use a community-led approach to building relationships with socially excluded groups and to identify systemic barriers to library use. Although this project concluded in 2008, the community-led approach continues to have a profound influence on service delivery in many public library systems, including Halifax Public Libraries, which has implemented two key positions: a Community Engagement Manager and a Director of Community Development as part of the senior management team to continue the library's commitment to community engaged services.

make the development of a class such as Community-Led Services particularly relevant and timely. Globally, over 25,000 Syrian refugees will be settling in Canada in the coming months. These newcomers will need a place in the community to access information, to borrow books in English and Arabic, to research employment opportunities, to practice their English conversation and reading skills, and to meet others. The public library often fulfils this role and community-led strategies will be particularly beneficial in forging connections with this new population, which will have some unique needs and interests.

Nationally, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report makes several calls to action related to improving education for Indigenous communities in Canada. Community-led approaches can be an important strategy for public libraries to serve the needs of Indigenous users by developing relationships with community leaders and collaborating on the development of programs and services that serve the unique needs and interests of this user group.

Locally, the 2014 One Nova Scotia Commission report *Now or Never* outlines a variety of strategies designed to change the economic future of the province in the next ten years. Many of these strategies relate to the creation of a greater culture of diversity, inclusiveness, and mutual respect, to make newcomers feel more welcome in our communities. Public libraries can play a strong role in creating welcoming communities for immigrants, refugees, and international students through the adoption of community-led approaches.

Dalhousie's School of Information Management: Revise or Retire an Elective

The School of Information Management (SIM) at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada has listed INFO 6500 Users and Services

among its elective offerings for many years, although the course has not been taught since 2008. A decision had to be made to retire this class and remove it from the elective listings or to revise and re-offer it. Members of the community services team at Halifax Public Libraries were invited to a curriculum meeting to discuss the future of this class and the positive decision was made to re-offer the class after it was revised to reflect a focus on the community-led approach to service development.

Users and Services becomes Community-Led Services

How has Users and Services changed in the transition to Community-Led Services? The original Users and Services emphasized traditional outreach approaches of taking library programs and services into the community rather than community-led approaches (See Campbell 2005/6). Back in 2006, I wrote an article for a theme issue of *Feliciter* (the journal of the Canadian Library Association) devoted to *Libraries, Lifelong Learning, and Outreach*, reflecting on Users and Services, which was an innovative class at the time.[2] Although the focus of this article was on traditional outreach strategies, it began by raising some key questions, which still resonate today: "How can future practitioners be encouraged to think of ways to anticipate and respond to the needs of their communities? And how can they be encouraged to identify and overcome barriers to use?" (p. 249)

These questions continue to be at the heart of the newly revised Community-Led Services course, which integrates a list of topics and

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[2] The article, entitled "Encouraging awareness of outreach in MLIS programs" was co-authored with Monique Woroniak, a graduate of Dalhousie University's MLIS program who completed Users and Services in 2006 and went on the a career in Winnipeg Public Library where she is the library's liaison with the Indigenous community, maintains the library's webpage for Indigenous resources (http://guides.wpl.winnipeg.ca/aboriginalservices) and, outside of her library role, has developed Groundwork For Change (http://www.groundworkforchange.org/), a website designed to provide non-Indigenous Canadians access to information about current and historical Indigenous issues and to build relationships with the Indigenous community.

readings developed by The Working Together Project as its framework and is organized to follow the stages in community-led planning, including:

- developing a community-led strategy and service structure
- understanding systemic barriers
- developing community entry techniques
- mapping community assets
- building relationship and partnerships
- conducting a social inclusion audit
- evaluating the success of community-led initiatives.

This class explicitly discusses the community engagement spectrum, and differentiates between traditional outreach (taking library services or programs into the community) and community development (partnering with the community to develop services and programs that are relevant and useful to them), with the overall focus most definitely on the latter. The brief course description for Community-Led Services now reads:

> *A basic goal of library service is that it be designed to meet the needs and interests of users. For any information organization to function effectively and usefully, there must be a match between the services offered and the needs of the users themselves. A community development approach, as applied in the Community-Led Library Service Model, provides this comprehensive foundation in the philosophy, challenges, and practical application of inclusive library and information services, with particular attention to the needs of socially excluded community members.*

One of the features of the community-led approach is that it takes time: time to build relationships, time to develop partnerships, time to plan and deliver programs and services. In the space of a 12-week university

semester, it is impossible to simulate this approach perfectly in a single class, but we have tried to create assignments that will give students realistic experiences working with the community-led approach and using the *Community-Led Libraries Toolkit*. These assignments include:

- Reporting on a user experience exercise in which students visit a library in the company of a non-user and ask the non-user to verbalize their observations as they explore the exterior and interior physical space, with the goal of identifying the library's strengths and potential barriers to use;
- Creating a community asset map and conducting an informational interview with a community service provider;
- Creating a profile of the information needs and information seeking behaviour of an underserved user group;
- Conducting a social inclusion audit of a library of their choice, assessing the extent to which the library intentionally seeks to serve a traditionally underserved user group.

Throughout the term, students will also be engaged in weekly online discussions, sharing their observations and experiences with their classmates.

Piloting the class

In winter 2016, two students, Jenna Knorr and Elizabeth O'Brien, MLIS students in Dalhousie's School of Information Management, "piloted" the class as an independent study option. Their goal was to gain both theoretical and practical experience in the Community-Led Library Service Model. They familiarized themselves with the philosophy, rationale, concepts, and practices that form the foundation of inclusive, community-led service through an in-depth literature review, and then, through consultation with the Community Engagement Manager at Halifax Public

Libraries, decided to focus on developing a project to determine how Shelter Nova Scotia's clients use, or don't use, the public library in Halifax, and how the library can better serve them. At this point, Shelter Nova Scotia and Halifax Public Libraries had not developed a relationship or collaborated on any initiatives, and Halifax Public Libraries identified this organization as one they were interested in working with. Shelter Nova Scotia is an organization devoted to providing housing to those experiencing temporary homelessness as well as supportive housing for people transitioning from shelter to community living (see http://www.shelternovascotia.com/). Jenna and Elizabeth's project forms an interesting case study of community engaged learning.

Initiating the project

Jenna and Elizabeth's first step in defining the needs of Shelter Nova Scotia clients was to meet with a senior staff member to create an asset map outlining the Shelter's existing resources and to identify any concerns with regard to how the residents of Shelter Nova Scotia use the public libraries in Halifax. Their goal was to identify any barriers that residents may experience when using the library in order to inform Halifax Public Libraries of any restrictive policies or practices that they may currently have in place. Through this conversation, it was determined that the best means of data collection would be to conduct paper surveys with the clients of Shelter Nova Scotia.

In consultation with the Shelter Nova Scotia administrators, Jenna and Elizabeth decided to host programs in two of Shelter Nova Scotia's locations, Barry House and Herring Cove Apartments. These two residences represent very different demographics: Barry House is an emergency shelter for women and children, with room for 20 people and an average of 17 clients a night. The house is located in the North End, close to the Halifax North Memorial Branch of Halifax Public Libraries.

Herring Cove Apartments is the newest Shelter Nova Scotia facility, located just outside of the peninsula, close to the Captain William Spry Library. It is a small apartment building, currently with eight residents but with room for up to 12, that offers long-term independent living facilities for men.

NSPIRG funding

Jenna and Elizabeth applied for funding from the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG) in January 2016. NSPIRG is a student-funded organization at Dalhousie University that provides funding for original research on social and environmental issues that address inequalities, promote awareness, and foster social change. In February 2016, they received $450 from NSPIRG. The funding allowed them to provide food at their events and to pay honoraria to the authors who did readings.

Two successful Shelter Nova Scotia events

Both events were held in the early evening and were structured in similar ways. Jenna and Elizabeth started the program with an introduction to their project, then a local author (Carol Bruneau at Barry House and Steve Vernon at the Herring Cove Apartments) gave a short reading. Both authors received an enthusiastic response and their presentations definitely helped to make the events more relaxed and engaging. Following the readings, Halifax Public Libraries' Community Engagement Manager and a staff member from the closest Halifax Public Libraries branch chatted about the library and what programs and services are currently available. They also brought along card registration forms and two residents signed up for cards on the spot. Finally, the consent forms and surveys were distributed, and Jenna, Elizabeth, and the library staff

members chatted informally with the residents as questions and comments came up. Overall, the events went smoothly and were equal parts fun and informative with lots of delicious food.

Survey results

The survey was distributed in paper format at each of the events, and consisted of a consent form and a questionnaire with six questions about public library use. Participants had the option to complete the survey on their own, or be guided through it with the assistance of an Halifax Public Libraries or Shelter Nova Scotia staff member.

Twelve survey responses were collected, out of a potential of 28 respondents - 43% of the target population. Eleven out of twelve participants indicated that they currently use the library. The most popular reasons were for computer access, books and information resources (both in the branch and to check out), to relax, and to watch movies. Others use the library as a spot for meeting others, reading the newspaper and doing the puzzles, and attending programs.

However, despite this high level of use, many residents were unaware of the services that the library currently offers; only four respondents answered that they were confident in knowing what libraries offer (see Figure 1). This indicates an opportunity to improve the promotion of library services among residents of Shelter Nova Scotia and for residents to be more involved in library programming and activities.
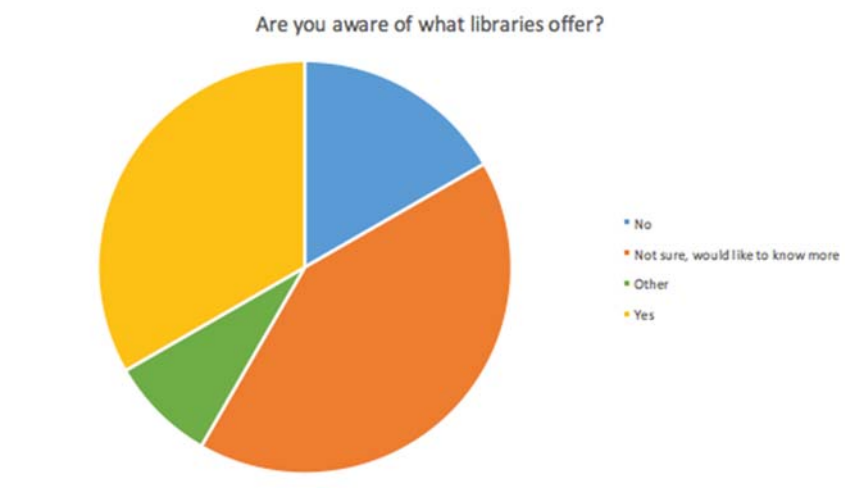
Figure 1: Shelter Nova Scotia's residents' awareness of public library services

Recommendations

Based on the information gleaned from the surveys and from their conversations with residents of Shelter Nova Scotia, Jenna and Elizabeth developed four recommendations which were presented to a joint meeting of Shelter Nova Scotia and Halifax Public Libraries in April 2016.

1. **Communication and Promotion**

Communication between Shelter Nova Scotia and Halifax Public Libraries could be improved and streamlined. This communication should be two-directional. Shelter Nova Scotia staff need to know whom to contact at the library when issues and questions arise. Similarly, Halifax Public Libraries staff should have a liaison at Shelter Nova Scotia to receive information and promote library services and events to residents. This information could be about what the library currently offers, such as updated programs for their local branch, or the different ways to use the library, obtain a card, attend events, and even ways that clients can request desired titles.

2. Programming

A number of survey respondents expressed a desire for different support groups. These included support groups for men, women, parents and children, as well as mental health and addictions groups. Currently, Halifax Public Libraries has a wide range of programs, including mental health support such as mindfulness and meditation in some locations, but only one client of Shelter Nova Scotia that we surveyed had ever attended one. While this may be solved by better communication and promotion of events and services (recommendation 1), Shelter Nova Scotia and Halifax Public Libraries could also work together to design programs that would be directly beneficial for the clients. This could result in a collaborative partnership centred around offering these programs, and others as needs and interests arise.

3. Staff Training

While survey results indicated that clients of Shelter Nova Scotia were satisfied with their interactions with staff at Halifax Public Libraries, it is still recommended that staff complete further training that would be helpful when interacting with a wide range of community members. This training includes Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and Nonviolent Crisis Intervention. Ensuring that 100% of staff undergo this training and develop these skills could improve interactions with a wide range of patrons in the library and could make the libraries a more welcoming and supportive place for patrons experiencing mental health crises.

In addition to these courses, staff at Halifax Public Libraries should be knowledgeable of services and organizations in Halifax that could be useful to patrons such as emergency shelters, addiction services, food banks, and others. It is vital that staff not only know that these resources

are available, but also that they have ready access to contact information, in order to pass this information along to patrons who may ask for it.

4. Social Workers in the Library

Many public libraries across North America, including the Edmonton Public Library and the Winnipeg Public Library, have social workers working within the library. It is our long-term recommendation that Halifax Public Libraries join this group of socially-minded public libraries. Social workers within public libraries offer a wide range of services, including frontline support, connecting patrons with other services and organizations, and leading programs such as support groups or employment outreach. We believe that this would be a valuable resource not only for clients of Shelter Nova Scotia, but for many other communities within Halifax.

Conclusion

Through this experiential learning project, Jenna and Elizabeth were able to learn about the community-led approach first-hand. Their initial work has the potential to form the foundation for an essential and emerging partnership between Shelter Nova Scotia and Halifax Public Libraries. Though the two organizations have co-existed in Halifax for many years, there had been little in the way of collaboration between them. The recommendations that arose from this project and that were shared with Shelter Nova Scotia and Halifax Public Libraries were received very well by both organizations, and sparked a conversation between the two groups that will continue, even now that Jenna and Elizabeth's project has come to a close.

The School of Information Management is excited to be launching this new class in Community-Led Services in the 2016-2017 academic year. The class will be offered in online format and will feature guest speakers from across the country, making it readily available to students or

practitioners in other regions. We would welcome anyone with an interest in learning more about the community-led approach to consider this opportunity. For more information, or to discuss the curriculum development process for this class, contact Vivian Howard at vivian.howard@dal.ca.

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Information for Social Change Number 36
Summer 2016

Library Schools as the Creators of Library Culture: An Opportunity for Cultural Shift?
Ken Williment

The following paper is based on an online discussion held in the spring of 2016 with an MLIS class at the University of Illinois, with John Pateman and Ken Williment. Many thanks to Martin Wolske who gave permission and provided access to the content discussed over the class. The following paper will review some of the issues and questions raised by the student and some of the discussion that resulted from the inquiries. This was a very interesting and exciting opportunity and process, since most American MLIS students have not previously been exposed to community development concepts in a library context. In essence, it provides an opportunity for practitioners and advocates of community development in libraries with a number of pragmatic and important questions which must be addressed when integrating this subject into library studies.

Background

The shift in library work with community is well documented. Over the course of the last twenty years a significant amount of work has occurred in library systems across North American and Europe, focusing on developing a philosophy, and then implementing, documenting and justifying effective approaches to working with communities (e.g. Muddiman et al., 2000, Working Together, 2008, Wilson and Birndi, 2008, Pateman and Williment, 2013). While much of this work has been

completed in library systems, by library staff, the amount of uptake in library schools has been sporadic.

This is significant, in part because without the exposure to these well document techniques, many library students are leaving library schools with university degrees primarily focusing on traditional skills which serve the needs of communities already using library services. A large gap exists, since students are not being exposed to various community engagement approaches, which assist library staff in working with underserved communities. After a discussion reviewing needs based and community led approaches, a number of interesting questions and discussions ensued. Summaries include:

"When librarian are working in community is there ever a white savior, or privilege savior complex?"

Newly educated librarians have spent a lot of time and money on their degrees. Community development approaches may be challenging at the beginning because librarians will want to go into communities and want to solve issues. It is easy to jump to conclusions and initially enter a community thinking one knows the issues and challenges. Community development processes challenge this approach, because the person on the street becomes the expert of their own and their community's needs, while the role of librarians shifts to entering a community and listening. The librarians' role focuses on initially building relationships with individual community members and co-producing, not teaching community.

As newly graduated librarians, it is important to be aware of the dynamic that power plays in interactions with community members (Williment, 2011). Initially entering the community as a listener creates a dynamic which allows for relationship building, and mitigates the creation of a power imbalance. Additionally, a number of core competencies - such as humbleness, humility and empathy – will go a long way to determining

how library staff are received and meet the information needs of community.

"How do you define the parameters of what the library can do? For instance, if the community decides the need is meals for children once a week – do you respond to it?"

There is a danger in setting limits. First, it tells the community that library staff know best, while also possibly presenting community members with the wrong message – that their ideas may be impossible or even viewed as stupid. By providing the community with a blank sheet of paper ideas can be unlimited, and through discussions realistic expectation and parameters can be set for meeting needs.

It is also important to acknowledge that it has been documented that approximately 80% of library staff time has traditionally been spent on meeting the needs of about 20% of the population. So the question is how can this be flipped, so library staff can identify how time is best spent to meet the needs of those who need library services the most. One idea that was discussed was the idea of the model branch, which occurred during Working Together, where library staff were asked to identify key programs and services which were desired by community (and staff), while identifying the amount of time spent on each activity (Pateman and Williment, 2013). Once staff work through this process it provides them with a baseline for making and measuring change.

If food is a need, then work with the community to find out how best to meet this need.

Also keep in mind, that no truly needs based library system exists, and it will never exist. It is something that we as librarians should strive towards meeting. It is a utopian view. However, the conditions for community-led libraries lies everywhere, and is not specific to demographics or politics. It is driven by community.

"How is community engagement different in the American verses the Canadian or UK contexts?"

Students referenced the Harwood Approach, Libraries Transforming Communities, which is a partnership with ALA. There was a discussion regarding community-led as a more radically democratic approach to community development work. Some questions arose regarding if a pre-packaged community engagement process which could be purchased, automatically infers a one model fits all approach?

A major concern came up about changing organizational culture. While adopting community engagement language is important, do library systems really want to change the way they work with community, or just look like they are changing?

"How do you get your country to spend more money on something like this – and not wars? How does this become a priority for funding?"

This is not something that you can throw money at to solve. Technically, it should not cost more money and library systems should be able to implement based on the resources they already have. The most important resource that libraries have are library staff. It is important not to convince ourselves that things are different, while staying within our comfort zone, or without changing a libraries organizational culture. While it is important to rewrite strategies, revisit and reorganize organizational structures and policies, the underlying change needs to occur with organizational culture. Without that piece, without change to organizational culture, nothing else changes. Additionally, it is important that engagement work not become siloed but instead becomes embedded within the way in which people do their work across the organization. It is a philosophical shift.

"There are a number of examples of libraries and librarians in the United States responding to communities in crisis situations (e.g. Missouri and Baltimore)."

It is important for library systems to be proactive, so when crisis erupts in communities libraries are situated to be able to respond. By having strong pre-existing relationships with community members, this can occur. Do not wait for the crisis to occur, then try to respond… it may be too late.

A question arose about changing behavior, which can eventually lead to changing thinking. This also led to a discussion on the impact of library language – and language being imposed on staff. "Community Engagement could be viewed as Socialism or Communism". What about ideology.

The question of ideology needs to be addressed at many different levels. Many times we are scared to acknowledge that libraries are political. Instead we focus on the pursuit of objectivity and balance, much like the creation of a balanced library collection. It is ok and it should be recognized and acknowledged that people are not born equal, they are born into different life circumstances such as various socio-economic conditions. Therefore, it is ok to treat people differently. The issue of equity verse equality is important to consider in a library context (Working Together, 2008).

We as library staff need to be courageous and brave. We need to own language and not allow other people to expropriate language. For instance, one common issue which constantly arises is people saying "but, I am not a social worker". This is true, so it is important to find different language which explains the approach being proposed such as community development workers. An alternative approach is to challenge those who

expropriate language – such as the social worker label above – to act as information professionals and research the work of social workers and compare it to library based community engagement.

What does this mean for MLIS Education?

While this is a very simplistic and superficial overview of some of the content discussed during the one afternoon discussion, it does begin to provide a pathway for library professionals and future library professionals to open a honest and frank discussion – ensuring that community needs are identified and addressed.

Presently, most library schools do not have coursework which integrate micro-level skills which allow students the ability of practically explore tools or approaches to work collaboratively with community to identify needs and generate responses to needs (in a library context).   In order for community engagement to succeed it needs to remain inductive and non-prescriptive.   Library schools are the first step in the acculturation process for professional librarians and without exposure to community based practices, a number of barriers will continue to exist to working with community –ranging from the use of jargon, the control of who identifies and creates programs and services, and the changing realities of where people seek out effective answers for local information – libraries run the danger of presenting an appearance of change, without addressing the systematic and systemic cultural change which truly needs to occur.

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Information for Social Change Number 36
Summer 2016

A Radical Reconsideration of Digital Literacy
Martin Wolske

A quick glance around my office brings in view various recent books, reports, and toolkits on libraries, for instance: *Developing Community-Led Public Libraries: Evidence from the UK and Canada*, by John Pateman and Ken Williment; *Transforming Libraries, Building Communities*, by Julie Biando Edwards, Melissa S. Robinson, and Kelley Rae Unger; *Public Libraries and Resilient Cities*, edited by Michael Dudley; the "Community-Led Libraries Toolkit"; and the "Libraries Transforming Communities Toolkit". Cutting across these resources is a clear statement that libraries can play a leadership role in fostering local, contextualized human and community development. Libraries serve as keystone institutions by harnessing new approaches for participatory, inclusive, community-led development of programs, services, and resources while also continuing to leverage traditional skills of library and information workers.

Supporting the transformation of information into knowledge for human flourishing within an "information age" and a "knowledge economy" especially points out the important role library and information workers have in advancing people's digital literacy skills. And indeed, we are regularly at the front lines of digital literacy training, often in response to the digital divide and in support of workforce training. More recently, this may also include Makerspace and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) programming. Many of these emerging initiatives are models for youth- and interest-driven programs that also advance 21st century digital literacy skills.

But is it possible that we approach digital technology and literacy training and programming through dominant paradigms that keep invisible the various ways our digital technology and media are controlled and mediated so as to privilege a few over the many?

Is it possible that that in our very efforts to "bridge the digital divide" and build "21st century digital literacy skills" that we are actually further deconstructing civil society and civic engagement, and instead furthering magical thinking about technology, a belief in the supremacy of the technocrat, and the centrality of market forces?

I joined the staff at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois, in 1995 to work with the Prairienet Community Network initiative. It served as the first Internet Service Provider to our community, but the broader objective was to explore how democratic problem solving might change if a community gained access to, and the skills to use and contribute to, the Internet. Shortly after, I also began teaching networking and information systems courses for Masters in Library and Information Science candidates. I made extensive use of service projects, community inquiry, and engaged scholarship to bring together the school and community to advance community goals (Montegue, et. al., 2009; Wolske, 2012). The above two critical questions may seem alarmist. But an ethnographic study of my course "Introduction to Networked Information Systems" conducted by Junghyun An (2008) found that without greater criticality[1], the answer to the two questions above very well ended up being yes, it is possible and indeed likely.

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[1] See Nicholas C. Burbules and Rupert Berk's 1999 essay "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits" for an excellent comparison of formal practices of two forms of criticality. The approach outlined in the current paper is in more sympathy with Critical Pedagogy, especially as outlined by Paulo Freire within the context of adult literacy. But the later conclusion of Burules and Berk regarding criticality as practice depending on difference also resonates strongly with the approach for digital literacy training outlined in the current paper.

This article focuses specifically on the need for a radical reconsideration of digital technology and digital literacy if we are to challenge the dominant paradigms that privilege a few over the many and to instead work towards progressive goals of a more just society.

The Historical Linking of the Digital Realm and Neoliberalism

Daniel Green's excellent 2016 article "Discovering the Divide: Technology and Poverty in the New Economy" brings to light the neoliberal economic agenda that served as the underlying framing of the digital divide and resulting policies directed towards eliminating that divide. The first of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) "Falling through the Net" reports came out in 1995, early in the Clinton Administration and concurrent with efforts by the administration to significantly reform welfare. Decreased emphasis was put on challenging the structures that create poverty. Instead, greater emphasis was put on short-term safety net support combined with workforce skills development. As a result, a healthy citizenry was redefined as "a bundle of human capitals brought to market by information technology" and digital literacy training became a limited investment in "workforce-oriented technology provision and training" (Greene, 2016). Ultimately, poverty was no longer situated as a societal problem but a problem of individual choices. To that end, this further justified expanded use of digital technologies for monitoring and policing of those in economic poverty (Greene, 2016; Eubanks, 2011; Eubanks, 2007).

In 1994, the think tank Progress and Freedom Foundation released the publication "Cyberspace and the American Dream: A Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age" written by Ester Dyson, George Gilder, George Keyworth, and Alvin Toffler that enunciated themes of digital utopianism, radical individualism, anti-government, pro-business libertarianism, and laissez-faire economics. A group comprised of theorists, philosophers, and

journalists brought forward the term cyberlibertarianism (Winner, 1997; Golumbia, 2013) to describe this unique blend of themes that was prominent in Silicon Valley and digital culture more generally at the time, and continues to dominate today. As but one example, consider how we speak of the corporate Twitter Revolution to explain the civil activism in the Middle East from 2009-2011, rather than considering the deep intellectual and political work people did to lead these revolutions, certainly in part by using emerging tools like Twitter.

For me, this is no more strongly evidenced than in Microsoft's Empowerment commercial that first aired during the 2014 U.S. Super Bowl, an event often known as much and more for its airing of major new commercials as for the actual American football played. The Microsoft commercial opens asking the question "What is technology? What can it do for us?" It then goes on to answer that question through images of amazing human feats accompanied with voice and text overlays making statements such as: "Technology has the power to unite us," and "Technology has taken us places we've only dreamed," and the conclusion that "It gives hope to the hopeless, and it has given voice to the voiceless." It's as if the people celebrating the moon landing, the people living on opposite ends of the world, and the double amputee learning to walk, each of whom are seen in the commercial, would have been left sitting in bewilderment were it not for a technology coming forward of its own agency, through the guiding hands of the technocrat and their corporate patrons, to help us. This is not to pick on Microsoft in particular, but to rather illustrate what I believe is the dominant narrative for all of us regarding technology, and especially digital technology – technology has agency to fix human problems.

A Radical Understanding of Technology

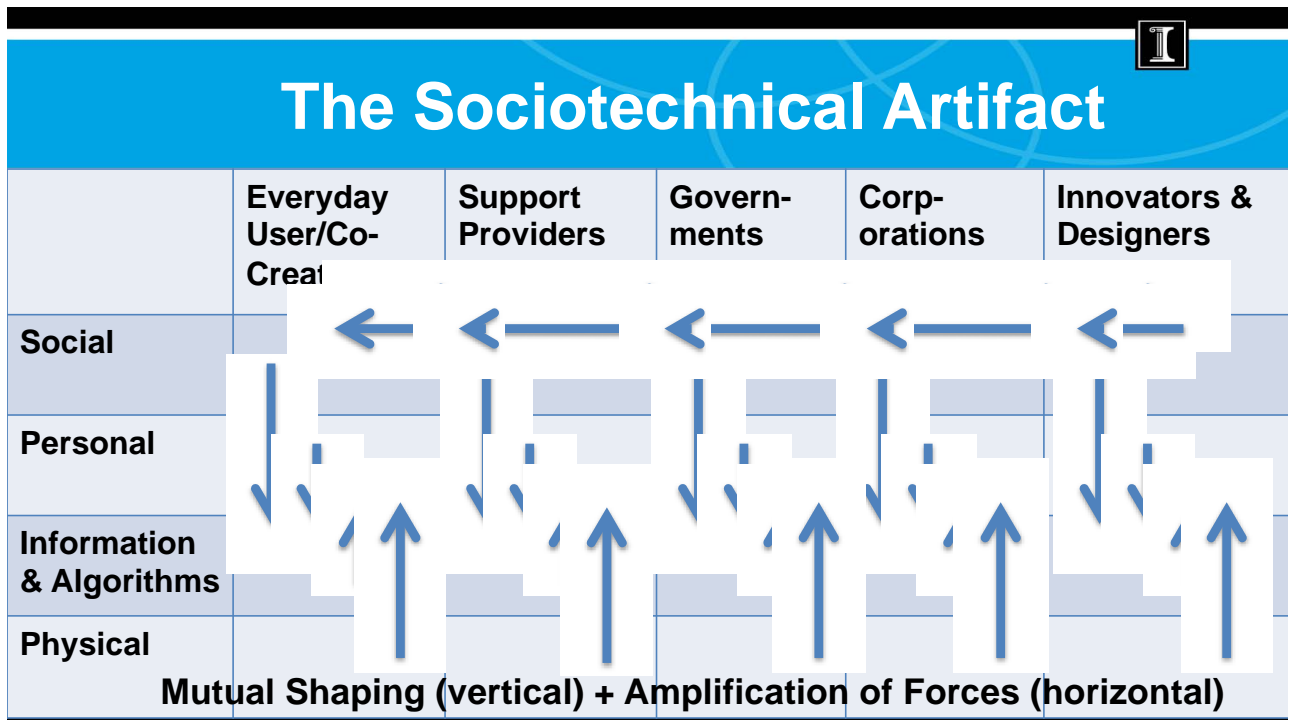*Radical – of or relating to the root of something (Miriam-Webster.com)*

Early in the development of digital technologies, engineers working on the physical infrastructure and computer scientists working on the software algorithms realized they could accomplish more if they coordinated their efforts. Later, behavioral scientists were brought into the mix to advance a more user-centered design of the technical aspects (Whitworth, 2009).

Today, there's a growing realization that our digital technologies are actually a seamless, indivisible combination of artifact, people, organizations, policies, economics, histories, cultures, and knowledge – they are sociotechnical products (Wajcman, 2010). As a result, the reliable, anticipatable relationship between user input and system's output is complicated by the continuous evolution of experience, knowledge, history, culture, economics, and policies of users and society. The social characteristics cannot be readily planned for or controlled, especially as the sociotechnical products are continuously co-created by everyday users to fit the ever-changing contexts and knowledge of the users and their communities (Bruce, et. al, 2009; Fischer & Herrmann, 2011). As such, the reductionist and positivist approach of the engineer and computer scientist must be complemented by, and live in continuous tension with, an interpretive approach of the social scientists, and *even more importantly, with the social expertise of community members*.

In his thought-provoking 2015 book *Geek Heresy*, Kentaro Toyama notes that technology does not itself have agency to transform us and the world around us. Rather, humans use technology to amplify our individual and group forces to transform our world. This is primarily framed from the perspective of the everyday user. However, if we bring criticality together with a sociotechnical perspective (Rhinesmith & Wolske, 2014), we also need to reflect on the human forces amplified at each level of a product's life cycle. We need to ask in what ways the forces of engineers, computer scientists, and garage inventors; of the president, CEO, board, and shareholders of corporations; of the marketers and salespeople; of

government legislators and administrators; of educators and social service agencies; of individuals and groups as co-creators; and of the many others in the product life cycle might be amplified in ways that are consistent with and counter to the values and goals of those using the sociotechnical product at each stage of the artifact's lifecycle to accomplish a task.

Mutual shaping of the sociotechnical product, hardware and software that is shaped by the social and personal preferences of stakeholders who themselves are shaped by the products that they use, happening at every stage of a sociotechnical artifact's lifecycle. For instance, the social context and personal preferences and biases of innovators and designers of a product shape how they create the software and hardware. But so, too, the socially shaped sociotechnical products that they use to perform their creative works shape how they do their work. Move through the lifecycle of an artifact, and we see CEO's, salespeople, legislators, educators, and many others both shaping the formation of that artifact through their own social lenses, personal preferences, and biases, and also being shaped by the tools they are using to support the formation of the artifact. In this way, also, the human forces of the people at each stage of the product's lifecycle influence people at the other stages through their social influences *to the extent that they have power and agency within that social system*.

The Sociotechnical Artifact

	Everyday User/Co-Creat	Support Providers	Govern-ments	Corp-orations	Innovators & Designers
Social					
Personal					
Information & Algorithms					
Physical					

Mutual Shaping (vertical) + Amplification of Forces (horizontal)

A radical understanding of digital technologies, that is, an understanding at a root level, brings to light the many ways cultural, economic, political, historical, and other social factors shape software and hardware, thereby shaping social systems. It lets us see how oppressive power relationships can become reified through use of some digital technologies more than others when the social systems shaping a specific sociotechnical product are on balance oppressive, even if invisible. We can see how historic neoliberal agendas can be brought forward over the course of decades through our use of digital technologies, even when those using them do not share such neoliberal values.

But at the same time, through this radical understanding of digital technologies we might begin to see that if we expand our approach to digital literacy so as to demystify not only the hardware and software layers of a sociotechnical product, but also the personal and social, we can foster greater agency to challenge oppressive forces and champion a more just society. Within a critical sociotechnical perspective, selecting appropriate technology becomes more than deciding when to use one

type of digital technology versus another (or whether to forego use of digital technologies altogether). It is to further recognize which specific sociotechnical product – which embedding of the many different social and technical influences across the lifecycle of that product – best aligns with the values, goals, cultures, contexts, and capabilities of those using that product to amplify their own human forces. This may seem an overly complex, or perhaps an impossible, task. And indeed, it does provide a significant set of challenges.

On the other hand, there can be a significant negative social impact if we do not shift from a reductionist understanding of technology as a neutral combination of hardware and software nuts and bolts, towards a critical sociotechnical understanding of technology. Individuals and groups may fail to recognize that there is a misalignment between the social forces that shaped the sociotechnical product and their own preferences, history, culture, capabilities, and context. As a result, we may have reinforced our personal doubts regarding their ability to effectively work with technology. We may give up and instead await "experts", or may unquestioningly follow the lead of market hype that a new model or new technology will resolve our problems and take us "places we've only dreamed" (Microsoft, 2014). Digital literacy training from a reductionist perspective of technology may thereby serve to reduce, not strengthen, important competencies needed to be fully digitally literate.

Over the course of the last two decades, I believe one of the lasting impacts of the neoliberal foundations of cyberlibertarianism and of digital divide concept and policy is this exact negative social impact decreasing our socio-emotional skills with digital technology. I have found this negative impact applies equally to those who have never directly used digital technologies, and to library and information workers who are daily users of technology.

As a minor example of a social misalignment, consider the manila folder and floppy disk icons used with some versions of software like the Microsoft Office suite. This metaphor arose naturally within a company focused on supporting office workers (company business model influencing software development). However, in my physical office, the manila folder is something I pull out when I have a set of documents I'm done working with and plan to archive. Thus, the manila folder icon to me means save. On the other hand, I spent many years using the floppy disk as a means to exchange files between computers. Thus, to me the floppy disk icon means open. As a result, when I use office software that incorporates these icons, I periodically confuse the two and click the manila folder icon when I want to save, and the floppy disk icon when I want to open (personal experience coming into conflict with developer and corporate experience).

I can laugh over this when I make the mistake because I have situated this misalignment within the context of differing histories, cultures, and thought processes, and because in the grand scheme of things it's rather minor. And I can laugh because I have confidence in my technology skills. But this is not the case for everyone, and indeed for many, such experiences result in doubt, not laughter. Move to an international context, and we can begin to critically reflect on how a Western economic, cultural, and historical framework embedded within a range of sociotechnical products can function as a neo-colonizing influence elsewhere.

Overcoming this neoliberal agenda and reductionist perspective requires the fostering of key socio-emotional skills with digital technology. In so doing, we also advance our ability to effectively select and appropriate sociotechnical products in ways that better amplify our individual and group forces to achieve goals for human and community development. In the next section, I would like to propose community inquiry, popular

education, and deliberative dialogue as foundational in such a social-forward approach to digital literacy.

Community Inquiry as the Basis for Digital Literacy

Literacy is a set of competencies and knowledge within a certain domain. Digital literacy, then, is literacy within the realm of digital information and communication technologies. Summarizing a variety of definitions regarding digital literacy and related computational thinking[2], the set of competencies include:

> Technical skills – the ability to appropriately select and effectively use a range of technologies;
> Information skills – the ability to seek, evaluate, interpret and apply relevant and trustworthy information across multiple media;
> Cognitive skills – the ability to logically analyze and organize problems in ways that allow use of digital and other tools to help solve them, and to generalize new processes to other problems;
> Socio-emotional skills – the ability to communicate and collaborate with others, along with the personal confidence, persistence, and tolerance, in order to tackle complex, ambiguous, and open-ended problems; and

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[2] Key resources defining digital literacy and computational thinking used in this summary include:
- Connecting the Digital Dots: Literacy of the 21st Century, by Barbara R. Jones-Kavalier and, Suzanne L. Flannigan. http://er.educause.edu/articles/2006/1/connecting-the-digital-dots-literacy-of-the-21st-century
- ALA Digital Literacy Definition. http://connect.ala.org/node/181197#sthash.TdJ13wxa.dpuf
- Computational Thinking Definition. http://csta.acm.org/Curriculum/sub/CurrFiles/CompThinkingFlyer.pdf

Application skills – the ability to integrate the above skills into our everyday experiences in order to advance our professional, personal, and civic interests and responsibilities

Wrapping around each of these five bullets I would add a radical criticality and sociotechnical perspective brought forward as part of community-centered deliberative dialogue processes – processes that each of the books, reports, and toolkits mentioned in the first paragraph of this paper highlight as core to the effective practice of library and information workers within the keystone institution of the library.

Paulo Freire used a popular education approach to adult literacy to link the learning of words, for instance, tijolo (Portuguese for brick), with generative themes regarding oppression in society, for instance, the way individuals participating in the adult literacy class are forced into low-wage jobs making bricks so that oppressors can build physical walls of exclusion. By stringing together the syllabus of words, for instance, ti-jo-lo-ti-jo-lo-ti-jo-lo-ti-jo-lo, participants come to see the social construct of words, and the opportunity for constructing new words. Thus, adult literacy also becomes a work of conscientization, of seeing and then working to bring about a new reality. How can we create similar popular education approaches to digital literacy training?

In their paper "On Communities, Justice, and Libraries", Buschman and Warner posit a Deweyan conceptualization of community as "cooperative coping" – the fostering of deliberation and exchange of ideas to support decision-making – for adoption by libraries. This aligns closely with community inquiry as outlined by Bertram "Chip" Bruce – an open-ended, democratic, participatory engagement connected to people's values, history, and lived experiences and conducted of, for, and by community. I would argue this should be the basis for digital literacy training.

What has this looked like in the work of my collaborators and me (Digital Literacy for ALL Learners, n.d.)?

We have been exploring a social-forward approach to digital literacy training. We learn best when doing things that matter to us. Rather than starting with skill shares, we often begin by seeking to understand the ultimate creative works participants are seeking to accomplish. What opportunity or problem are participants trying to address? What goals, values, histories, and context are motivating these works? What existing tools are currently being used, and what are the social ramifications for augmenting or replacing them? This is the beginning of a community inquiry into the skills and technologies that might more effectively help amplify the human forces at work addressing the community-defined creative work.

We incorporate the various aspects of digital literacy as infill where need is identified. This is the heart of all project-based learning — skills development is a response to project selection and initiation rather than as standalone training. While we often incorporate off-the-self technical and information skills curricula, we typically add our own exercises, discussion starters, and critical reflection questions to more effectively: a) advance cognitive and socio-emotional skills development and a critical sociotechnical perspective; and, b) bridge skills development with the projects that initiated the digital literacy infill.

We try to include exercises to explore all dimensions of a sociotechnical product. For instance, in a workshop on using a mobile phone within a project, exercises might be included that have participants research the mission statements of different handset vendors and cell network providers, and map these to the different features of the hardware, software, and cell packages as a way to consider how some phone/cell network combinations might work better than others for a project.

We regularly intersperse discussion and critical reflection with hands-on activities to bring forward participants human and social expertise to digital literacy training. No one knows better the goals, values, and context motivating digital technology adoption than those taking the

training to accomplish a creative work. Further, as instructors we may not be aware of the way a sociotechnical product and the broader supporting infrastructure – an infrastructure that may work well for us – may be misaligned with the goals, values, preferences, history, culture, capabilities, and contexts of participants. Such misalignment at times privileges some over others in ways that create injustices. As such, our willingness to transition from digital literacy instructor to learner itself can be an act of justice, and can lead to further justice-oriented actions.

Importantly, such an approach does not separate out digital literacy learners for special remedial education. Rather, it brings together people with many different types of expertise into deliberative dialogue and community inquiry. As noted by Iris Marion Young, group difference becomes a necessary resource for such dialogue and inquiry to flourish in at least three ways:

"Plurality of perspectives motivates claimants to express their proposals as appeals to justice rather than expressions of mere self-interest or preference."

"Confrontation with different perspectives, interests, and cultural meanings teaches individuals the partiality of their own, and reveals to them their own experience as perspectival."

"Expressing, questioning, and challenging differently situated knowledge adds to social knowledge."

I would argue that the real potential for learning labs, innovations spaces, and Makerspaces in libraries will be realized precisely to the extent that they are able to transcend digital literacy training for its own sake to become hubs for group dialogue and community inquiry across difference. This approach does not seek to minimize or negate the value of technical skills development, or for that matter workforce development, but rather to situate these within the broader human and community development goals as defined by the experts on the community context, the

community members themselves. Further, it situates technical skills development within the broader information, cognitive, socio-emotional, and application skills of a more comprehensive digital literacy conceptualization and practice as outlined above.

As a concrete example, here's an outline of a session on hardware that was the first of a five-part workshop (Wolske, n.d.). It was offered to parents of students attending a local elementary school whose constituents were primarily from low socio-economic households. The school's motto, "Technology and Literacy for the Community", inspired them to look for creative ways to further engage parents as collaborators in their children's education, knowing that a significant number of households did not have a computer at home, and some parents had little experience using computers. At the end of the five sessions, parents had refurbished their own computer that they took home while also developing a range of digital literacy skills:

> Goals: Begin drawing out each participant's community expertise by highlighting his or her everyday innovative acts.
> Foster the formation of a community of inquiry comprised of parents, teachers, and students focused on the possible roles of digital technology in student learning.
> Advance digital literacy skills by generalizing their everyday expertise to the digital realm.

> Icebreaker: As you enter, please take a moment to draw a picture of an innovator innovating.
> Introduce yourself and describe one way you've taken something you have and used it in a way it wasn't meant to be used to solve a problem. Then tell us about the picture you drew [most people draw a white male working alone doing something they deem innovative].

Discussion: How do the pictures we each drew compare to our descriptions of ways that we've innovatively repurposed something we have?

Hands-on Activity: Disassemble a computer, highlighting the main parts as we go. Highlight upgrade options and maintenance needs. Imagine the flow of a keystroke as it travels from the keyboard input port to controller to CPU to memory/storage and back from the CPU to the video controller and out to the video display Review other disassembled devices, including a laptop, a tablet, and a smartphone. Note that the flow of the keystroke passes through the same general parts.

Discussion: What makes a desktop computer different from a laptop computer, a tablet or a smartphone if they use the same general parts?
What values and goals may have gone into the different ways the parts are put together?
How might choosing one format over another benefit certain values and goals over others? Which is the best device for education? How might you redesign the device if you could to better fit your values, goals, and context?
What is it? [Place a smartphone on the table, turned off. As suggestions come in, challenge participants to think expansively across different contexts to note how they have themselves been co-creators of the smartphone. Also challenge them to consider what it can't be because of policy or economic restrictions.]

During a later session of the five-part workshop, we installed educational software called eToys. The graphical display of the software didn't work properly on some computers but worked fine on others. Without

prompting, the parents, some of whom had rarely if ever directly worked with computers, reflected back on the keystroke exercise from day one and began to put forward ideas of what might be failing. They were able to correctly diagnosing that the problem might be related to the CPU's ability to talk to the video controller, even though they couldn't specifically use those words, but rather referred to the analogy "traffic cop" used to describe the keystroke flow on day one. And they found three different solutions for resolving the problem based on that diagnosis, again even though they couldn't specifically identify the technical phrases to describe their solution.

In a discussion arising from a different workshop that included both parents and teachers and that used a similar outline, an African-American parent noted the frustration they feel when teachers question their decision to purchase a smartphone rather than a laptop. They went on to note how as a parent of color, they need to teach their children to call a relative or close friend whenever a police officer seems to be looking at them closely, and to then put their smartphone in a pocket with the connection open in case a negative encounter develops. As such, the smartphone, while an inferior device to the laptop in some ways for educational purposes, has a unique lifesaving property, the value of which trumps other considerations if the purchase of only one device is possible.

These two examples highlight that when we demystify the social <-> technical aspects of our digital technologies, we both increase the agency of learners and open up the sharing of each participant's expertise among the group as part of an emerging community inquiry. While I've been actively working to build better digital literacy training for over a decade, I still feel as if I've only scratched the surface. This continues to be a new world of discovery, especially as every digital literacy workshop becomes a co-learning space to further explore new realities regarding how sociotechnical projects are shaped by, and also shape, us and the world

around us by amplifying a wide range of human forces. To this end, our Digital Innovation Leadership Project (n.d.) has been working to bring together the demystifying technology approach to digital literacy outlined in this paper with collective leadership training to further create possibilities for situating digital literacy within broader social justice and community development objectives.

In conclusion, whether as part of pre-professional and professional development of library and information workers, or as part of programming offered by these professionals, a radical reconsideration of digital literacy is essential if we are to effectively use sociotechnical products to amplify human forces to advance human and community development for human flourishing. This social-forward approach to digital literacy training doesn't negate learning about the nuts and bolts of the hardware and software, but situates such learning within the individual and group goals and values of participants. This has led to the following key takeaways:

> We need to recognize the many ways the social, cultural, historical, economic, and political values and practices of stakeholders at each point in a sociotechnical product's lifecycle tend to become embedded within that product.
>
> There are exclusionary social structures, some of which we actively – even if unintentionally – reinforce through our choices and actions regarding technology.
>
> Digital literacy without a critical and sociotechnical perspective is at risk of fostering magical thinking and technological utopianism.

Therefore, those of us with technology expertise, while we may enter into community engagement as instructors, need to be willing learners if we are to understand the exclusionary social structures embedded within sociotechnical artifacts. On the other hand, the digitally excluded and

participants from the margins of society, while they may enter into digital literacy training as learners, bring essential sociotechnical expertise and teaching to each of our digital literacy training activities. Group difference is an essential deliberative resource within such a social-forward approach to digital literacy programming and services. In taking such a transformative approach, we library and information workers take a step away from the dominant neoliberal paradigm of digital technologies and digital literacies and instead take a step towards amplifying human forces working towards a more just society.

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Information for Social Change Number 36
Summer 2016

Theoretical Approaches to Public Libraries
Joe Pateman

Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world. The point is to change it (Karl Marx)

In his seminal 1981 article, Robert Cox highlighted the strengths of critical theory and the shortcomings of problem solving theory in international relations. This article applies these two types of theories to a comparison of public libraries. The problem solving approach underlying traditional libraries has limited the revolutionary role that libraries have historically performed in educating and empowering the working class. In the modern era of neoliberal capitalism, traditional libraries have failed in advancing human needs, democracy and the self-actualisation of the individual. The radical democratic and transformative function at the heart of public libraries can be restored by needs based libraries, which draw upon the insights of Marxist critical theory.

Theoretical foundations

In order to understand the relationship between theories and the policies of public libraries, it is necessary to situate them within the context of Marx's theory of history. According to Marx, history is the growth of human productive power. Forms of society rise and fall according to how they promote or hinder that growth:

In the social production of their life men enter into relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis, on which arises a legal and political superstructure (Marx 1978: 4-5).

These sentences reveal three ensembles, the productive forces, the relations of production, and the superstructure, among which certain explanatory connections are asserted. The productive forces are those facilities and devices used in the production process: means of production and labour power. Means of production are physical productive resources such as tools and machinery, whilst labour power includes the strength and skills of the producers that they apply when labouring (Cohen 1982: 484).

The relations of production are relations of economic power, of the power that people possess or lack over labour power and the means of production. In a capitalist society the relations of production include the economic power capitalists have over the means of production, the limited power that workers have over their labour power, and their lack of power over the means of production. The sum total of product relations constitutes the economic structure of society, which is also called the base. Finally, the superstructure includes legal and state institutions of society (Cohen 1982: 485).

Relations of production correspond to the level of development of the productive forces of society, and are in turn the foundation on which a superstructure arises. Here Marx uses functional explanation, which is where the existence of an event is explained by its function. Accordingly, Marx argues that the level of development of the productive forces

explains the nature of the production relations, and they in turn explain the character of the superstructure (Cohen 1982: 485).

Since public libraries are state institutions, they belong to the superstructure. According to historical materialism, public libraries play a role in stabilising, legitimising, and developing the economic base of society. The characteristics of public libraries are explained by their role in performing this function. Put differently, public libraries have the characteristics they do by virtue of their role in sustaining the economic base.

Theory and public libraries

Like all institutions that form part of the superstructure, public libraries are guided by a set of foundational beliefs, which shape the nature and purpose of the service. Marx (1978: 4) argued that all thoughts and ideas are ultimately conditioned by the way that we go about producing our means of existence: 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness'.

In the case of public libraries, a certain set of beliefs congeal into what can be called a theory. All theories that have society as their object serve two purposes. The first aims to solve problems within the terms of a particular perspective. The second critically analyses the theorization process itself, making it aware of the perspective that produces certain theories, and its relation to other perspectives. This facilitates a different perspective from which the problematic becomes the construction of an alternative world. Each of these purposes leads to a different kind of theory.

The first purpose gives rise to problem solving theory, which arises when a particular set of beliefs become dominant, and guides the legal and state institutions of the superstructure (Cox 1981: 128). Such beliefs are called ideologies, of which problem solving theories are one example. Ideologies have a number of characteristics that distinguish them from beliefs in general. Firstly, ideologies obscure and hide the contradictions of a society, and they are therefore false. In the case of capitalism these contradictions are the irreconcilable antagonisms between capital and labour. Ideologies therefore perform a similar function to the superstructure, in that they legitimise and promote the base and forces of production. Ideologies benefit the class that owns the means of production, whilst keeping the subordinate class in their subordinate position (Elster 1985: 462-464).

Traditional public libraries are guided by problem solving theory, an ideology that has hindered their ability to serve human needs and positively contribute to the full rounded development of the individual. Problem solving theories focus upon consolidating the current system, instead of revolutionising it. Accordingly, the strategy of traditional libraries is focused primarily upon the needs of active library users, who are predominantly white, middle class, female and over 55 (Pateman 2016). Traditional libraries only cater to existing users, without questioning why it is that only particular kinds of people use the library. Furthermore, they seldom attempt to widen their user base to encompass people who are marginalised in society, such as ethnic minorities and the working class (Pateman 2016). This systematic discrimination disadvantages those groups of people who would benefit the most from the libraries services, whilst aiding those privileged groups who need it the least. These policies hinder the education of the working class, which in turn delays the development of their revolutionary class-consciousness. Traditional libraries therefore perform the conservative function of consciously perpetuating the structural inequalities of power under

capitalism. They serve the interests of the ruling class by keeping the working classes in a permanent state of ignorance and fragmentation.

The management structure within traditional libraries also accords with the exploitative class relation of capitalism-that between manager and worker. Under this bureaucracy, staff are organised into rigid departments, within which the communication is vertical. Leadership is position based, with most of the control and resources concentrated at the top of the hierarchy (Pateman 2016). This authoritarian management structure prevents library workers from democratically controlling their work together, which results in systematic alienation and the prevention of individual self-actualisation.

The second purpose of theorizing leads to Marxist critical theory, which guides the policies of needs based libraries. In contrast to problem solving theory, such an approach does not does not take the prevailing system of institutions and social power relations for granted, but critically analyses their origins and process of change (Cox 1981: 129). Needs based libraries analyse the framework of action that traditional libraries take as their parameters, and encompass the social and political system as a totality, rather than its separate components. This means that instead of consolidating the existing user base, needs based libraries focus upon accommodating non-users; particularly those with the greatest needs. In practice, this means that needs based libraries prioritise the needs of the working class, who are the most downtrodden and disadvantaged members of society. By putting forward needs based strategies that develop the knowledge, power and class-consciousness of the proletariat, needs based libraries serve the revolutionary function of advancing the socialist cause. This function is internationalist, in the sense that it transcends national borders, and encompasses a united global proletarian movement. Accordingly, needs based libraries draw their inspiration from public library services in socialist countries, such as the late Soviet Union,

Cuba, China, and Vietnam. Such countries consciously promote libraries as democratic institutions for the education, empowerment and cultural development of the working class. The economic, cultural and intellectual achievements of these countries are a testament to the fact that needs based libraries can form the vanguard of socialism.

Instead of delivering the service in a traditional top down, hierarchal manner, needs based libraries identify, prioritise and meet community needs via co-production. The library and the community work together in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of library services in a truly democratic manner. Accordingly, democracy is the fundamental principle underlying the critical theory approach of needs based libraries, as they allow a community of equals determine their own destinies in cooperation with others. They provide a crucial public space in which the working class can meet, talk, socialise and enhance their collective power.

Public libraries and historical development

According to the materialist conception of history developed by Marx, any program or strategy should reflect the conditions of its specific historical period (Pateman 2016):

All epoch making systems have as their real content the needs of the time in which they arose. Each one of them is based on the whole of the antecedent development of a nation, on the historical growth of its class relations, with their political, moral, philosophical and other consequences (Marx and Engels 1975: 462).

In order for any plan or strategy to be successful, it must evolve and change in tandem with economic and political development. The problem solving approach of traditional libraries is ahistorical, since it assumes the continuation of the status quo, and the permanence of power structures

that form its parameters. Whilst taking a fixed order as a point of reference is useful for the purposes of discovering regularities, specialising in particular areas of expertise, and minimising the number of variables involved In a problem, this apparent strength rests upon a false premise. The social and political order is not fixed, but is constantly evolving. This assumption of fixity is not merely a simplification of method, but an ideological bias. When viewed from the historical materialist perspective of critical theory, problem solving theories are conceptualised as ideologies that function in order to obscure and legitimise the inherent class contradictions of capitalism. Problem solving theories are thus not value free or 'neutral', as they accept and promote the given order and class structure as the only framework for action (Cox 1981: 129).

As traditional libraries are guided by problem solving theory, they have failed to innovate their service in line with technological, economic and political developments. As Marx and Engels (1975: 462; 1978: 693) stated in relation to the utopian socialists, the strategies of traditional libraries 'acknowledge no historical development', and are offered as 'absolute truth…independent of time, space and the historical development of human beings'. Although they are 'revamped' every few years in an attempt to keep up with the changing environment, the infrequency of these changes means that they are usually outdated by the time they are implemented (Pateman 2016). When such changes do occur, they always seek to consolidate and stabilize the current user base and management structure, instead of revolutionizing it. Due to this ahistorical view of society, traditional libraries with the most noble of intentions continue to support the status quo of inequality and bourgeois rule. In practice, this means the perpetuation of policies that consciously exclude the working class and other disenfranchised groups from libraries, the maintenance of undemocratic power structures, and the preservation of systematic alienation. Whilst traditional libraries may think that they

are promoting the interests of ordinary people, they are in reality instruments for the suppression of the working class. Not all ideology results from ignorance however. Some traditional libraries are conscious of their role in protecting the position of the ruling class, and willingly serve this function.

The critical theory underlying needs based libraries is a theory of history, which means that it is concerned not only with the past, but also with the continual process of dialectical change (Cox 1981: 129). Rather than viewing contemporary neoliberal capitalism as the 'end of history', needs based libraries acknowledge that societies are constantly evolving. Needs based libraries therefore deal with a changing reality, and continually adapt their service to the social environment it seeks to understand (Cox 1981: 129). According to Marx's theory of history, capitalism is merely a transitory stage in the historical development of human society, to be inevitably replaced by socialism, and eventually, communism. In anticipation of these future developments, needs based libraries undertake a process of permanent revolution, by continually enhancing the democratic and needs based aspects of their services. These asymptotes, theoretically grounded in the ideas of Marx and Engels, provide the thrust of all innovations in the needs based library approach. Such a strategy serves the dual purpose of accelerating the transition to socialism, in addition to ensuring that libraries continue to pioneer the emancipation of the working class.

The critical approach of needs based libraries undertakes practice from a perspective that transcends the existing system that problem solving traditional libraries takes as their parameters. This extends the scope of normative choice in order to favour a public library service qualitatively different from the prevailing one, but which is limited to a range of alternatives that are feasible transformations of the existing world. Needs based libraries are therefore utopian in the sense that they represent a

coherent range of alternative systems. However, this utopianism is constrained by its comprehension of the historical process. It rejects unrealistic and ineffective alternatives just as it rejects the permanency of the existing system (Cox 1981: 130).

This article has shown how different theoretical approaches to public libraries have huge implications for the service they deliver. It was found that traditional libraries are guided by Problem solving theory, an ideological set of beliefs that obscure and legitimise the class contradictions of capitalism. Accordingly, traditional libraries serve the conservative function of perpetuating inequality and the exploitation of the working class. In contrast, needs based libraries are informed by Marxist critical theory, which avoids the pitfalls of ideology by granting a scientific insight into the dynamics of structural economic development. This has allowed needs base libraries to restore the progressive role that libraries once performed in creating a more inclusive, democratic, and free society. At a time when the inequalities and contradictions of capitalism are there for all to see, revolutionary needs based libraries will be indispensable instruments in advancing the working class and socialist cause.

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Information for Social Change Number 36 Summer 2016

Among shelves. Librarianship for librarians:

A starting project on LIS training

Edgardo Civallero

Edgardo Civallero (Buenos Aires, 1973) holds a degree in Library and Information Sciences from the National University of Cordoba (Argentina), where he also studied History. He specialized in knowledge classification and documentation languages, libraries and indigenous and minority societies, oral tradition and book history, and he has published a number of academic works on these and other LIS fields. He has also participated in international organizations (IFLA, UDC Consortium) and in different professional projects (open access, scholarly publications, etc.), and he has worked on progressive/critical librarianship, LIS and resistance, library and human rights, and the role of libraries and information in social justice.

Civallero also works as an editor and a graphic designer, and has developed a career as a performer and researcher in the field of music. His research in both music and LIS is combined with an intense divulgation activity.

Weak foundations

One of the main issues LIS has to face on an international level is the lack of proper professional training among librarians, i.e. library staff. This

problem –whose many aspects have been fragmentarily documented in professional literature, and which is usually associated to "developing" countries, although it is not exclusive to such nations– affects a significant percentage of workers in all categories of libraries, but especially in what may be called "base" libraries: the ones in closer contact with their community and its needs and resources, and where significant relationships between people, knowledge and books are first established; the libraries everywhere – the basic, grass-root ones.

For these librarians, opportunities for LIS instruction are frequently neither available nor affordable, and when they get one, the contents they are usually taught are decided, designed and supervised by an external, unconnected reality (more often than not, one with very different priorities); having little or nothing to do with the needs and concerns of the targeted audience, this training often becomes irrelevant and/or inapplicable.

The issue has been timidly identified and addressed in various ways over the last decades (an example is UNESCO's "Libraries for all!" program in the 90's), usually with mixed results. Nowadays, digital networks are literally flooded with educational and informational resources, which are expected to provide limitless training possibilities for everybody; however, far from making things easier, they have made them more complicated by contributing narrow, outdated contents and low-quality, misleading texts. In addition, the goals of mainstream LIS education have drastically shifted over the past years, some of them blatantly contradictory. In short: for reasons that should be carefully studied, the situation has neither received sufficient attention nor an appropriate response.

Dealing with this problem should be a top priority for the LIS international community, because it primarily concerns the basic library network all around the world. Children, elderly people, elementary school students or

workers, just to put a few examples, generally do not use the services of the big, fully-resourced library systems, but the ones provided by their public, school or community libraries in their villages or neighborhoods. If the staff of these units had access to the training materials they require to perform their work, the basic services would be improved.

In need of reinforcements

Generally speaking, LIS education (as many other areas of the Humanities) has gone through a substantial, noteworthy change over the past two decades. Since a number of the library's central processes have been or are being transferred to computers and the virtual space —making them more software and hardware dependent—, LIS education is increasingly being limited to a set of technical and administrative skills, with several key areas of the discipline being put aside (and others privatized and handed over to companies). Librarians are being deprived of the ethical, scientific and humanist elements of their profession; instead, they are given pre-set lists of practical instructions, which "entitle" to them to serve as an interchangeable cog in a larger machine.

Paradoxical as it may seem, technology imposes restrictions on what can or cannot be done in libraries (and by librarians); however, LIS education does not question or challenge its primacy, neither suggests ways to move outside or beyond this paradigm. This reveals a need for empirical and theoretical tools to assist librarians in being more in control and able to evaluate situations and act in a proactive, independent way. For librarians, barriers are growing. And, somehow, their liberty of movement —even their possibility of moving— is diminishing.

When thinking about what kind of LIS education should be given to librarians without a formal training or a proper set of skills, one idea

comes to mind: it is necessary to provide tools and elements for them to build a solid conceptual basis; hence, a strong emphasis should be placed on the –much neglected– fundamentals of the profession. Once the groundwork has been laid, librarians should be able to make plans and solve problems autonomously by applying their knowledge to practical, daily situations, and they will gain confidence in their newly acquired / developed skills little by little.

By putting together all these ideas, the project "Among shelves" was created.

One small step forward

"Among shelves" Project, conceived by Argentinean librarian Edgardo Civallero, is aimed at creating basic LIS handbooks intended for library workers – and anyone else interested in the topic.

The collection is meant to cover a set of basic subjects organized into four main areas: librarianship (design and creation of a library and its collection, basic goals and services), documentation (cataloguing, classification, indexation, thesauri), technology (from basic hardware/software and web design to web 2.0, data mining and digital curation) and miscellaneous (history of the book, critical librarianship, reading support, research and writing techniques). Its pages will bring together theory and practice alongside a necessary dose of critical thought; through them, the most essential LIS concepts, ideas, methods and techniques will be delivered and explained in a simple and yet thorough way.

Each book will be available as a digital download (.pdf), and will be freely distributed under a Creative Commons license (attribution-non

commercial-no derivatives) from an online platform. Several printing options will be provided, including DIY printing and binding. All documents will be subject to revision, correction and updating: feedback from readers will be welcome to improve subsequent editions.

The materials are designed to be translated and adapted to as many languages and cultural contexts as necessary (and possible), especially to indigenous and minority languages. In that sense, the model behind this idea is fully scalable, expandable and replicable.

"Among shelves" includes a parallel research on librarians' current education, skills, work and functions, as well as comprehensive documentation on the development and dissemination of process itself.

The project is meant to stand up for a library model based on knowledge and people, where technology is just another tool; to back up the work of "base" libraries, the ones offering library services to the largest percentage of population throughout the world; to endorse the idea of "sustainable library", closer to degrowth than to irresponsible consumption of finite resources. To sum up, it is a project intended to support librarians who are critical and aware of the reality and want to play an active role in re-shaping it.

The project takes its name from a common everyday situation in most libraries around the world – the libraries where things still happen *among shelves*, and to which the work of this project is devoted to.